

Mindbody's Bold Move

After cranking out an ultra successful exhibit-marketing program in 2011, Noelle Luchino Feist delivers a repeat performance — devising a Bold-themed campaign that exceeds all goals and prompts Mindbody Inc. to adopt the concept company wide. *By Linda Armstrong*

Repeat victories are about as rare as happy Hollywood marriages. Just ask the New York Jets. After winning the Super Bowl for the 1968 season, the beleaguered football team has yet to make it back to the

As the event marketing manager for Mindbody Inc., a provider of business-management software and apps, Feist first won the accolades of her company and EXHIBITOR magazine in 2011. That's when Mindbody earned a Sizzle Award for its Orange campaign, aptly named because it referenced both the company's corporate color and the fruit it doled out as an in-booth traffic builder. At a key show in 2011, the \$11,080 integrated program increased Mindbody's return on investment by 36 percent compared to the previous year, and garnered a 196-percent uptick in leads.

But by the end of 2013, the once-fresh Orange campaign had soured with attendees who'd been there and squeezed that for almost three years straight. "Attendees had already experienced the campaign, so it no longer offered the element of surprise or spurred their curiosity," Feist says.

So how did Feist avoid becoming the Vanilla Ice of exhibit marketing? She took a "bold" approach, symbolically and literally. Feist devised a program based on the concept of being bold (e.g., bold moves, bold changes, bold lives), which ultimately delivered results that rivaled those of her first victory and earned her a second EXHIBITOR award to boot.

ALL STAR

Noelle Luchino Feist, event marketing manager for Mindbody Inc., brings five years of global marketing experience to her role, and manages a team that exhibits at more than 55 shows annually and produces additional B2B and B2C events. Her team previously won a Sizzle Award in 2011. Feist is a graduate of California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, with a Bachelor of Arts in Art and Design. She is currently working toward a degree from Boston University in International Marketing Management.

big show. Or take Cuba Gooding Jr., whose role in "Jerry McGuire" earned him an Oscar in 1997. But ever since he first cradled the glorious little golden dude, he hasn't received a single Oscar nod — and after amassing a list of rotten-tomato roles longer than his acceptance speech, the box office hasn't shown him the money either. Indeed, delivering a successful repeat performance can be an almost insurmountable feat. And that's exactly what makes Noelle Luchino Feist's accomplishments truly remarkable.

"Your first fail will become your best success."

Hurdles and Headwinds

Like all good tales of triumph, Feist's story is filled with formidable obstacles. Certainly, her overarching goal was to create a successful exhibit-marketing program. But Mindbody's target audience added some serious hurdles to the mix.

Mindbody sells software and apps for all things related to business management, including appointment and staff scheduling, automated messaging, and budgeting reports. Its target audience comprises small-business owners in myriad vertical markets, ranging from fitness, yoga, and martial-arts instructors to spas, salons, and dance centers. Thus, the new marketing theme had to appeal to a wide variety of audiences. "Our campaign had to be everything for everybody," Feist says. "For example, it couldn't focus too tightly on yoga, or we'd risk alienating the martial-arts people."

In addition, those small-business owners are a rather zealous yet peculiar bunch. "Our clients are intensely passionate about what they do," Feist says. "But most clients don't hold MBAs, and few are very tech savvy. So business-management software can be foreign and frightening to them." Thus, Mindbody must make its products seem friendly and approachable, particularly in the exhibit environment. "We have to remove the intimidation factor and be as passive as possible," Feist says. Otherwise, attendees tuck their heads into their hoodies and scamper off toward the free weights and smoothie machines.

This fear factor was one of the reasons the previous Orange theme featured scads of free oranges on displayed in the booth. The familiar, benevolent fruit lured the health-conscious attendees to the exhibit, and before they knew it, they'd been

drawn into conversations with staffers and were even broaching the subject of software. "We've learned that forcing an interaction with this audience is ineffective," Feist says. "So we sometimes skip the pre-show marketing and focus on an in-booth attention getter that draws people inside the space and into a conversation."

Along with identifying a one-size-fits-all theme, Feist also needed new exhibitry. "We had a 10-by-10 and a 10-by-20-foot exhibit for small U.S. shows, a 20-by-20-foot booth for large domestic shows, and two 10-by-10 fabric exhibits — one in London and one in Australia," she says. "The domestic booths existed long before the Orange theme, so they were due for replacement. Plus, since there's a telecommunications company in Europe called Orange [i.e., Paris-based Orange SA], we were never able to create international exhibits with the same Orange theme as our U.S. booths. So as we crafted a novel



Mindbody Inc. invited attendees to share their bold advice on its exhibit walls.

theme, we planned to simultaneously build five new exhibits."

As if all of that wasn't challenge enough, Feist and her team also would need to devise the creative for the whole kit and caboodle. While Creatacor Inc., an exhibit house in Clifton Park, NY, would fabricate the booths, the task of designing them,

their graphics, and whatever creative elements the team dreamt up would fall to the in-house team. "Mindbody thrives on a sort of DIY mentality, so we design all of our own creative components," says Doug Hales, Mindbody's brand content manager. So despite the myriad obstacles, Feist and her team of five Mindbody professionals began setting a course over and around them, creating as direct a path as possible toward the goal.

The Birth of Bold

Feist's team hoped to come up with an overarching theme prior to the company's annual marketing retreat, a multiday planning session to map out the upcoming year's strategy. So several weeks before that gathering, she held a series of meetings to hammer out a concept. That hammer, however, missed the mark and whacked a few thumbs. "We just couldn't think outside the box from inside our conference room," Feist says.

After a series of false starts, the team switched playing fields. "We all volunteered to meet at my house several Fridays after work," she says. "When people arrived, I broke out some tools to help us brainstorm, including a few copies of EXHIBITOR magazine, some crepe paper, markers, notepads, snacks, and wine." Whether it was the crepe or the grapes, it didn't take long before the Mindbody team honed in on the Bold theme.

Hales asserts that Bold was the quintessential concept for Mindbody's unique market. "By just starting a business, our clients take a huge, bold leap in their lives," he says. "They start out with a passion for their craft, and then they want to turn it into a business, which is a very scary thing for

someone without a business education. Suddenly they have a billion questions and no answers. How do they budget, grow, manage people, market, advertise, etc.? It's an enormous challenge. But despite their fears and knowledge deficit, they do it anyway. They hold tight to their passion, and they persevere. Our customers make huge, bold moves, and they empower their own clients to do the same every day."

Mindbody's Bold theme, then, would be an emotional message with which customers and prospects from every vertical could connect. It would not only subtly congratulate clients for their past brave efforts and encourage further daring moves, but also suggest that Mindbody's software and apps could help manage some

of their seemingly tedious business tasks (e.g., scheduling, budgeting, accounting, etc.), freeing up time for them to pursue their passions and grow their businesses. And paired with this message would be inspiring, authentic images of Mindbody customers and their clients at work. Mindbody figured that pairing moving, emotional imagery with a simple motivational message — Be Bold — would shoot an arrow straight to the heart of its target audience and compel attendees to stop at the exhibit and interact.

Little did they know then, but this arrow also nicked an artery with All-Star Awards judges. "The Bold theme is too emotional and specific to work for most audiences," one judge said.

"But the compelling imagery, absence of technical jargon, and simple message was appropriate for Mindbody's target market. The program also offers a lesson in the importance of knowing your audience, hitting them where they live, and inspiring them to be the best they can be personally and professionally. And it proves you don't need a huge booth space to do it."

After Feist and her team pitched the Bold concept at the retreat, the director of marketing shot it down. Or rather, she rejected it as just an exhibit-marketing campaign — and instead hailed it as

the new marketing directive for the entire company. "The director's first response was, 'This isn't our exhibit-marketing campaign; this is our everything,'" Hales says.

So just like that, the Bold exhibit-marketing concept became the basis for Mindbody's website marketing, first annual user conference (held in October 2014), print and online advertisements, international pop-up events (launching in 2015), and all print collateral. Clearly, Feist had laid the groundwork for a repeat performance on more fields than she'd imagined, but the litmus test for the concept would come at the 2014 International Health Racquet and Sportsclub Association show (IHRSA) in San Diego, where the Bold campaign and new 20-by-20-foot booth would make their debut.

Running the Offense

Going into IHRSA, Feist passed on pre-show promotions and instead focused her attention on creating an in-booth experience to captivate attendees and bring the Bold theme to life. Thus, attendees' first exposure to the Bold campaign occurred on the trade show floor.

As attendees approached Mindbody's exhibit, their eyes were drawn to a 12-foot-tall header that bore the Mindbody logo. The header actually sat atop a bar of sorts, centered between six software-demo stations, each featuring a monitor and keyboard integrated into a freestanding kiosk. However, the initial point of contact for techno-phobic attendees — and a central element in Feist's passive attack plan — was a triangular-shaped storage closet positioned on the corner of the space. In particular, booth visitors were drawn to the exterior of the closet,

which was covered with a white-board-like material, Bold-themed text, and

The 20-by-20-foot booth featured a triangular closet clad in white-board-like material. Decked in Bold-themed text and black-and-white images of Mindbody clients in action, the structure attracted passing attendees.



couldn't-miss rectangular images of Mindbody's own customers in action.

A line of text ran across the top of each of the closet's three walls: "Share some BOLD advice," "Tell us why the future looks BOLD," and "What's your next BOLD move?" Inspirational quotes and photos along with client testimonials appeared beneath each headline, and blank areas interspersed throughout encouraged attendees to grab a marker from a nearby bin and leave their own messages. For example, images of a man lifting weights, someone doing yoga on a beach, a surfer paddling out to sea, and more graced one side along with text such as "Commitment is the distance between you and your dreams" and "Impossible is a point of view." Meanwhile, a header over the closet displayed another Mindbody logo and the "Be Bold" text.

"Attendees were drawn to the photos because they were personal and inspirational," Feist says. "They

tapped into our prospects' passions. So people just picked up a marker and started writing without ever talking with us." Mere minutes after the show opened, attendee contributions — such as "Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway" and "If you don't make things happen, things will happen to you" — started to fill the wall's empty spaces.

"The white-board activity provided exactly the kind of passive interaction we needed to reach our audience," Feist says. As attendees ogled and wrote on the board, many asked staffers about Mindbody's offerings. To address the silent types, however, staff (dressed in casual pants and gray-black T-shirts branded with the "Mindbody. Be Bold." slogan) simply talked about the wall and/or what attendees were scribbling on it. Thus, booth staffers opened the lines of communication with a topic unrelated to Mindbody's seemingly scary products, and then slowly shifted the

Best business advice I've gotten:
"Do what you love - the rest will follow!"

MARKETING THEME

conversation to discuss attendees' needs and the company's offerings.

Once staff qualified attendees as being at least minimally interested in Mindbody's software and apps, they offered them a branded bag — a high-quality sack featuring the "Be Bold" text, one of the inspirational images from the wall, and quotes such as "Dreams deserve to get off the ground." And if the attendee still seemed engaged, staffers physically relocated the conversation to the central bar. Here, they gave attendees one of the roughly 6-inch-square cardboard cubes stacked behind it.

Featuring the Mindbody logo, a black-and-white photo similar to those on the closet, and inspirational text, each box was sealed with a circular sticker that read "You just

previously assembled the box had signed his or her name on a blank line underneath.

Next, attendees found a bevy of orange items atop raffia grass, including sunglasses, a wristband with the company logo and Be Bold message, jelly beans, and a white-board marker. Also included were four Bold-themed info cards, each of which promoted a different Mindbody offering, namely its conference, software, Connect app, and Reach app.

In addition, recipients discovered what Feist calls the Mindbody "look book." In conjunction with the company-wide adoption of the Bold theme, the firm traded its traditional 8.5-by-11-inch handout for a 24-page, 5.75-by-5.75-inch pamphlet. Its cover displayed the Mindbody logo

and text atop the opposite page read "BOLD is saving your time for what matters." Text went on to describe time-saving software features and benefits, such as automatic billing and automated check in.

"Nobody reads literature at a trade show," Feist says. "But we wanted our look book to strike a chord with people so that when they started going through their stuff in preparation for their return flights, it would be attractive enough for them to stick it in their carry-on bag and flip through it on the ride home." Based on attendees' reactions to it, Feist is confident the look book did just that.

As recipients perused the box, staffers provided a brief overview of the company's products. And as they chatted with staff, attendees came upon the lead card — a 2.5-by-5-inch card with "The future looks Bold" text and client images on the front, along with room for attendees to input their contact information and their own "Bold goal" on the back. By this time, attendees' technology fears likely had been squashed, and their interest in Mindbody's products — or lack thereof — established. So attendees either filled out the lead cards, handed them to staffers, and set off toward a demo kiosk, or they simply went on their way with their branded bags, boxes of goodies, and newfound knowledge about Mindbody's offerings filed away for another day.

Podium-Worthy Performance

Within hours of the trade show's opening, Feist and her team knew that their Bold theme was a hit with IHRSA attendees, as it drew hordes of people into the booth, helped them forge a connection with staffers, and delivered product information



Booth staffers gave qualified attendees branded cardboard boxes that featured a black-and-white photo and a sticker with the words, "Hello. Hope you like awesome. Because you just got a box of it." Inside, attendees discovered an array of orange-themed items including jelly beans, sunglasses, and an orange white-board marker.

made a bold move." Inside the top flap attendees discovered a clever customization, i.e., a sticker with the words "Hello. Hope you like awesome. Because you just got a box of it." A white box on the sticker displayed the words "Handmade by Mindbody Employee:" and the employee that had

and "Where will BOLD take you?" text, and the Bold theme continued across each interior spread, which comprised a motivational image paired with information about one of Mindbody's services or features. For example, one spread held a picture of a Mindbody client lifting weights,

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway."



in a subtle, yet effective, fashion. But as any sports fan knows, you can deliver a decent performance all day long but still end up in the loser's bracket when the buzzer sounds. So despite the apparent IHRSA success, several questions remained. Would the Bold campaign's lead counts keep pace with projections? Would the program continue to deliver leads throughout the year at large domestic shows, small regional events, and international exhibitions? Would the new exhibits be an aesthetic hit with all parties involved? Would the Bold theme prove effective in other marketing endeavors? The simple answer was yes — squared.

By the end of Mindbody's third financial quarter, its exhibit-marketing campaign had already surpassed its 2014 lead goals by 7 percent, with several more trade shows to go on the calendar. Plus, the new exhibits and accompanying Bold campaign translated well overseas, as the international offices had amassed 890 leads, a figure already well above 2013's total of 795 leads.

In addition, the Bold Mindbody Conference was a success that blew away

attendance projections the first time out of the gate. Held Oct. 13–14, 2014, in Santa Monica, CA, the user conference offered breakout sessions, keynotes, panel discussions, and networking activities (such as the Bold Bash hospitality event and the Bold Awards ceremony honoring clients who had reached bold new business milestones) — all of which focused on helping Mindbody clients grow their businesses. "The conference was all about relationship building, ongoing engagement with clients and the industry, and educating customers not only about the capabilities of our software and applications but also about how they can grow their business and continue to fund their own passions," Feist says.

And the hits just kept coming throughout 2014. Any Bold-related posts Mindbody made to its Facebook page typically scored engagement rates 200 percent higher than posts unrelated to the campaign. Along these same lines, after the website was infused with Bold messages, images, and videos, it experienced a 36-percent quarter-over-quarter increase in online purchases. What's more, Bold print ads have derived a 100-percent month-over-month jump in lead generation compared to ads unrelated to the theme.

Clearly, then, Feist's Bold campaign not only ticked the boxes regarding internal marketing goals but also won over the hearts, and pocketbooks, of Mindbody's unique audience. And instead of being a one-hit wonder, Feist scored both amazing results for her company and a coveted All-Star Award in the process. Knowing Feist, though, she has likely taken very little time to pop a cork and bask in the glory. More likely than not, she's already strategizing her next bold move and laying the groundwork for a "three-peat." **E**